

International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking , February 8,2020.

(Prayer and Awareness to be used for Young People)



1. Opening Prayer

Holy and Loving God, you created us all, as your children, in your own image and likeness. You have entreated us to relate with the people and planet with love and respect. Lord, you know that in many ways we have failed to show love and care. Because of human greed and cruelty, many young people today, have been cheated, swindled and sold into slavery.

On this feast day of St. Bakhita, we pray that you give us wisdom and understanding, compassion and courage to hear the cry of your children in slavery and to heal their wounds. Give us your grace to work together to restore the broken dignity of all your children around the world and to end the trafficking in persons.

2. Slavery?

Slavery is buying and selling human persons as things. A slave is a property of another person who is made to work without any reward/salary. Their children and children's children also become

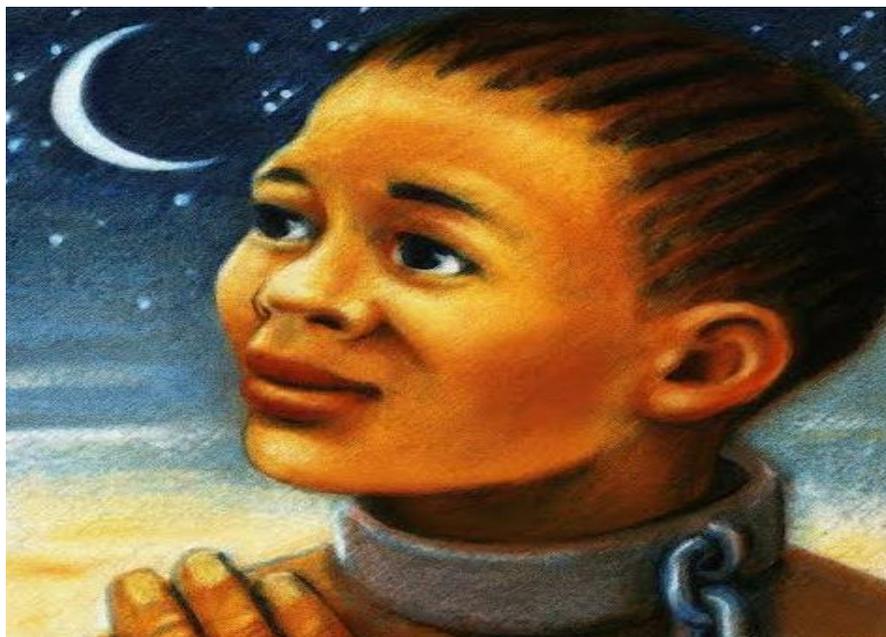
property of the owner. This system was existing throughout the world. Slave trade was abolished by law in British empire in 1833. Today throughout the world slavery is illegal. [There are international laws, since 1926, against slavery.](#) All the countries are obliged to work to end human trafficking. But there are more slaves today than in the past. According to Urmila Bhoola (Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, UN Human Rights Council) there are 40 million people living as slaves in the world. Among them, one out of every four, is a child. Every 30 seconds one person is made a slave. Today slaves come from everywhere without the distinction of color, nationality and the economic status. The contemporary slaves are forced to:

- work without pay or for minimum pay
- get married to someone without their consent
- prostitution,
- organ harvesting
- and fight with arms in conflicts areas, used as human shield, suicide bombers.

In the past when slavery was legal, it was expensive to purchase a slave but today an average cost of slave is \$90. Earlier slaves were encouraged to beget children but today pregnancy is seen as disturbance for extracting labor and sex work. In the past slaves had stable relationship with the owner but today they are resold many times and at last when they are no more profitable, they are thrown out. So contemporary form of slavery is crueller than that of the past.

3. February 8th as International day of prayer and awareness Human Trafficking:

On December 2, 2014 the leading [religious leaders of the world signed a pledge in the Vatican to end human slavery by 2020.](#) Followed by it, Pope Francis requested the *Union of Major Superiors* (USIG/USG) to work towards eradication of slavery. Since 2015, the February 8th is celebrated as international day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking.



Saint Josephine Bakhita

(https://www.brcblog.org/2019/02/novena-to-saint-josephine-bakhita_3.html)

February 8th is the feast of [*St. Josephine Bakhita*](#) (1869-1947). She was born in *Olgossa* in the *Darfur region of Sudan*. She was trafficked at the age of 7 and made a slave. Many times, she was bought and sold by her owners. In 1883, an Italian family bought her. She used to do babysitting while the family was attending Holy Mass. Gradually she was drawn to Catholic Church. Then the owners were planning to move to Africa; but she refused to go with them. This refusal, ended up as a litigation in the court. The Congregation of Canossian Sisters pleaded on her behalf. The judge freed Bakhita stating that slavery was illegal in Italy since 1885. In 1890 she received baptism and confirmation. Then she became a nun in the congregation of Canossian Sisters in Venice, Italy. There were 114 scars on her body. Due to trauma, she forgot her name given her by her parents. The kidnappers nicknamed her '*Bakhita*', meaning the 'fortunate' one. At baptism, she received the name *Josephine*. So she is known as *Josephine Bakhita*.

As a nun, she forgave the slave traders; lived a holy and loving life. She died on February 8, 1947. She was declared a Saint on October 1, 2000. Her death day is celebrated as her feast day as well as a day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking.

4. Let us listen to contemporary slaves:

After having heard the story of St. Josephine Bakhita, we shall hear the voices of the people who have experienced slavery in our time (the facilitator can assign children to read the following).

[*Charlotte Awino from Uganda*](#): 'I was 14 years when I was abducted at night from my boarding school, along with 139 other girls, by rebels of *Lords Resistance Army* which was fighting against the Ugandan army. We were made to walk three months to enter into Southern Sudan. Many of the girls were killed on the way since they were too tired to walk. Some of them died of starvation. Many died due to cholera. Those who survived were used as human shield during fighting; so, many of us were killed when the rebels put us in front when they were fighting the Ugandan government soldiers. I somehow have survived, but then I was made a sex slave for rebels eight years. By the time I was finally able to escape, I was 22 years old and had two children. How do you name me? Am I a prostitute, rebel or terrorist?'

[*Somchai from Thailand*](#): 'I am 40 years old from Thailand. I couldn't attend school because my parents were very poor. I was making my living by collecting and selling wastes. I was offered an opportunity to work in deep-sea-fishing vessel. In fishing ship, I dreamt of travelling around the world and earning money. But in the ship, the situation was worse: I ate very little, never rested, and never received salary. After a few months I was abandoned in an island in *Indonesia*. I didn't understand their language, I suffered a lot...'

[*Kikka Cerpa from Venezuela*](#): 'I loved a stranger. I trusted him. But I was forced into prostitution by him. I did not know that he was part of a sex trafficking business group that was trafficking girls illegally from Venezuela to the US. While being in prostitution, sometimes the police raided our rooms. Instead of rescuing us, they demanded sexual services for them. Never once did the police or government officers ask if we were trafficked. Never did they offer us any help or protection'.

5. Reflection:

Dear children, have you ever heard about such events in your town or villages? (Give time for sharing)

Why have these people become slaves? (answers can be generated from the children similar to the ones given below).

- They were poor and jobless in their own countries.
- They were not educated.
- They had the false belief that in other countries, there would be better job opportunities and they would earn more money
- They were cheated by their traffickers
- The trafficked victims were not helped by the government
- The traffickers were not arrested and punished.

6. **What shall we do to end human trafficking?** (The facilitator can generate answers from the children similar to the ones given below)

To end poverty:

- I will not ask for things that my parent can't afford. I will not own goods which I do not really need. I will try to be content with the little things I have
- I will do whatever is possible to help the poor
- During holidays, I shall volunteer to do some social work
- Poverty is also due to lack of rain and harvest. So I shall plant trees; shall not use plastics; shall not waste or pollute water
- I shall develop an appreciation for the locally available sources of livelihood such as agriculture, fishery, carpentry, masonry etc.
- I will purchase snacks and things, which are made by local companies and local people
- I shall inform my family and friends, to purchase vegetables, meat and fish which are locally produced.

To eradicate illiteracy: Knowledge is Power. Educate Yourself and don't get sold into slavery:

- I am given opportunity to study and so I will study well in school
- I will motivate other children to study
- I will share with friends, parents and relatives this information about ending human trafficking

Being cheated:

- I shall use discretion when strangers speak and offer me big opportunities, with promises to send me abroad for better jobs and assurances to earn more money
- I shall sincerely share of my problems with elders, parents and teachers, and listen to their guidance
- If I come across children appearing malnourished, bearing physical injuries, working excessively long hours, working in restaurants, begging on the streets etc., I shall get closer to them and hear their stories; then I shall help them by informing my parents, teachers or local government authorities
- I shall pray to God for my safety and that of others.
- I will not get connected to strange people in social media
- I shall learn a martial art for self defense

Failure of the government:

- From the school we shall write a letter to the local government officers to create job opportunities for people, to enforce the implementation of government laws prohibiting trafficking in persons, to punish the traffickers and not the victims.

7. Intercessory prayers: (the facilitator can assign children to pray the following).

Response: *God, listen to the cry of your children.*

For the bonded labourers in places like cocoa plantations, mining companies, fishing vessels, domestic works. We pray Lord, that they may have justice, freedom, hope, healing and peace. *Response..*

For traffickers and exploiters. We pray that they may have conversion of heart and cease from the inhuman acts of trafficking in persons. *Response..*

For the world leaders. That they may work together to stop the sale of products, made from slave labor, to outlaw the exploitation of people and to do all in their power to end human trafficking. *Response..*

For the children. That they may have the wisdom and courage to discern the wolves that appear like sheep and resist their deceitful ways. Help us, Lord by your grace, so that we can inspire and help others. *Response..*

8. Concluding Prayer:

Loving God, we pray through the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita who was sold into slavery as a child. May her story be an inspiration for all who struggle to be freed from all forms of bondage. Help us to cultivate within us love for the people, particularly for the needy and the suffering. Bless our resolve to work for the eradication of slavery and bring laughter into the lives of those who are trapped in the scourge of modern day slavery. We pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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